

THE LAST INITIATION CEREMONY AT GUPUNA SANTA ANA, EASTERN SOLOMON ISLANDS

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Abstract. This paper is based on a set of photographs which records the last initiation ceremony held in the village of Gupuna on the island of Santa Ana in the Eastern Solomons. The photographic record and an ethnographic description are brought together not only in order to present facts which were not previously available but also to give a fuller understanding of what initiation in Santa Ana entailed.

Initiation into the bonito cult was formerly a central institution in certain cultures in the Eastern Solomons. Descriptions of the initiation ceremonies were recorded for Sa'a, Ulawa and the Arosi area, north of San Cristobal by Ivens (1927) and by Fox (1925). Mr Geoffrey Kuper, himself a Solomon Islander, published in the *Suva Medical Practitioner* in 1937, an account of the ceremonies held at Santa Ana. His account was based on actual experience as he was initiated at Natagera late in the 1920s. It is evident in his account that the forces of acculturation had already had a marked effect upon the bonito cult and that it was in danger of being phased out.

In 1943, during World War II, an initiation ceremony was held in the village of Gupuna in Santa Ana. This was the last initiation ceremony held in this village and the whole event would have passed unnoticed and unrecorded had it not been for the fact that high ranking officers of the American Armed Services, then stationed at Guadalcanal, accepted an invitation to attend the public part of the ceremony. General Howard, Commander Wilson, officers of the Medical Corps and other officers visited the island, some by flying boat (Fig. 1). Official Service Command photographers made a photographic record of the day's activities and a set of the photographs taken was presented by a Major Merrill Moore of the Medical Corps to the Auckland Institute and Museum, in May, 1944.

The photographic record of Gupuna's last initiation ceremony is a legacy of great ethnographic value not only for the anthropologists presently interested in the Eastern Solomons but also for the people of Santa Ana itself. An important historical moment was recorded. In 1956 the last Santa Ana initiation ceremony was held in the village of Natagera. It is unlikely, as discussed in the conclusion, that another one will ever be held in Santa Ana. For the people of Santa Ana, therefore, the photographs record the passing of a great native institution whose demise they seemed powerless to prevent. But it is remembered with nostalgia and fondness as yet another native Solomon Island custom which had to give way to the mixed blessing of modern progress.

There are thus good reasons for publishing at least some of the photographs which have been stored so long in the archives of the Auckland Museum. Besides presenting the Eastern Solomon Islanders with a part of their history and heritage, the photographic record furnishes ethnographic data of value to anthropologists and art historians. The only extant visual record of the initiation platform used in Santa Ana is presented here. Of importance also is the visual documentation of the material paraphernalia which is associated with the initiation ceremony.



Fig. 1. Port Mary at the village of Gupuna, in Santa Ana. The American visitors arrived by flying boat thus affording the local people their first exposure to such machines.

In this paper I present a selection of the photographs, here published for the first time, and provide such background ethnographic information which will help place the photographic record in cultural context. Emphasis is upon ethnographic description rather than theoretical discussion but not exclusively so.

THE CONTEXT OF THE AMERICAN VISIT

It was to the final day of the initiation ceremony, known locally as *maraufu*¹, that the Americans were invited. I will describe briefly what had occurred before the public event and then return to the activities which were covered by the photographic record. My information on the initiation ceremony is based largely on Geoffrey Kuper's written account but it is supplemented by discussions with him and others at Gupuna and on data collected during a period of fieldwork in the area.

A *maraufu* was held every five or six years but the exact timing of the event was decided by the elders and owners of bonito fishing canoes (*againiwaiiau*). The decision was determined in part by the availability of canoes and fishermen, the wealth holdings of the parents, the prospect of good crops and anticipated success in overseas trading. Once the decision is made it is assumed by everyone that economic conditions are favourable. Food supplies are adequate and there is a sufficient number of pigs available for the final feast. I will argue later in this paper that interference with the economic base of the *maraufu* ceremony helped bring about its demise.

¹ In Ulawa and Sa'a, which is at the southern tip of Maramasike Island, the cognate term is *malaohu* (Ivens 1927: 344).

The ideal age at which a boy should become a *maraufu* candidate is difficult to determine. Geoffrey Kuper was 12 years old. Apparently, on payment of red shell money known as *faga* (worth \$24 Australian now, but two pounds in 1936) boys from other villages could be included in the group and very young boys down to 8 years old would be accepted. Kuper expressed the opinion that it was unusual formerly to include boys as young as 8 years. Nearer the ideal were ages of 12 up to the late teens. In this respect Santa Ana was more conservative than either Ulawa or the Arosi area where according to Ivens (1927 : 472) even breastfed infants were segregated in the custom house. Mothers were required to visit the custom house regularly in order to breastfeed their sons. Strictly speaking and under normal circumstances women are not permitted near the custom houses.

The father of a *maraufa* candidate had to select the fishermen and the canoe on which his son is to "catch" his first bonito. The owner of the canoe (*againiwaiau*) and the father come to an arrangement which is "sealed" by payment of shell-money to the owner.

When Geoffrey Kuper was initiated there were fears among the islanders that there might not be another initiation ceremony. Thus Geoffrey's parents, Mr Henry Kuper and Kanana, decided that their younger sons of 10 years and 8 years respectively should go through the ceremony. Furthermore it was decided by the elders to reduce the period of seclusion from one year to six months. By contrast, the normal period of seclusion in Ulawa was three to four years but Ivens (1927 : 137) made it clear that the length of seclusion depended very much on the availability of adequate provisions and wealth. A further indication of changed circumstances in Santa Ana was the fact that only in the village of Natagera were there custom houses where the boys were to be secluded.¹ Neither Gupuna nor Nafinuatogo possessed custom houses, whereas, ideally, every major village should have had its own custom houses and did formerly.

On the first day of the *maraufu* cycle the boys to be initiated gather at the custom houses and are divided into two groups one to each house and each under the care of a *mwane-apuna*, or priest. Once they enter the custom houses the period of seclusion begins. The boys are required to eat and sleep in seclusion and every attempt is made to keep them free of ritual defilement. They are told by the *mwane-apuna* what is required of them. They are to be quiet, orderly and obedient and once they have followed faithfully all the instructions given they will acquire the status of men.

Early the next morning the boys go to the sea and bathe. On return to the custom house, or *aofa*, they breakfast on cooked yams, coconuts and fresh water. This is to be their regular diet for most of the seclusion period. From this time onwards the fishermen will avail themselves of every opportunity to take out on a fishing trip the initiates for whom they are responsible. If the fishing is poor a canoe might go out several days before making a successful catch on an initiate's behalf. Wealthier fathers will try to select fishermen of "charmed" reputation and canoes which are renowned for their success in order to spare their sons the embarrassment of failure.

¹ While in the field I saw the two Ngatagera custom houses in which Geoffrey Kuper and his *maraufu* companions were secluded. These fine houses, rich in decorated posts, burial canoes, skull containers, ceremonial bowls and bonito fishing canoes were the last of their kind in the area. Unfortunately both were totally wrecked by a cyclone at the end of 1971.

There are four fishermen to each *againiwaiau*. Each has a bamboo rod some twelve feet long and a ten-foot line which trails either a one-piece hook (*tagi*) or a two-piece hook (*fariqafa*) if at the bow end or a composite lure (*teku*) if at the stern end. Occupying the privileged position in the canoe, is the man nearest the bow. He is expected to land more bonito than the others both by virtue of the freedom he is permitted and by virtue of his reputation. The man nearest the stern is also a fisherman of established reputation and he acts as a steersman. In Santa Ana there are two main attributes of a man of prestige. He can fight as a warrior and he can fish for bonito. For the more ambitious man "bigmanship" is a major concern. Among all the fishes of the sea, the bonito reigns supreme in terms of ritual value and food. The shark is associated with death and ancestor worship and thus never sought by fishermen. Shark is not food and Bernatzik (1936 : 71) plainly erred in listing shark as a food item.

When Geoffrey Kuper was taken out fishing his canoe left soon after breakfast and the crew paddled an estimated seven miles before encountering a school of bonito. The presence of a school is usually indicated by frigate birds which compete with the bonito for the small fish that bonito feed on. The water sparkles and boils with the feverish activity of hungry bonito and frigate birds. Such frenzied feeding usually attracts the sharks which prey on the bonito. The religious significance of the frigate bird - bonito - shark complex was discussed by Davenport (1971 : 408). Into this vicious circle preys man, the fisherman, who, like the shark, hunts for the bonito. The aim of fishermen is to position themselves in the centre of the circle catching the bonito while they are feeding and making sure that their canoe does not capsize because man is also akin to bonito. Should a man fall into the water he will be attacked and eaten by sharks with the same gusto that bonito are attacked. Moreover, he bleeds like the bonito.

The first bonito caught by the crew was handed to Geoffrey Kuper. He removed the hook from its mouth. Then he put his arms around it and hugged it to his body, the head of the bonito being just under the initiate's chin. He was then required to lie on his right side and remain hugging his bonito catch until the canoe reached the shore. Meanwhile, however, the fishermen continued fishing, trying to catch as many bonito as possible before the school broke up. Geoffrey Kuper's canoe returned to Natagera at 5 p.m., after a very long day with nothing to eat or drink except fresh coconut milk. The crew caught ten bonito that day and six other crews fished the same school of bonito and were equally successful.

For the initiates, the essential requirements are that the first fish caught by the crew become ritual fish which they must hug close to their bodies until the canoes return to shore. Each initiate and his bonito then go through several ritual acts, after which the bonito becomes sacrificial food for the priest, the initiate's father and male relatives of the initiate.

When the canoe finally approached the shore two men came out to keep it steady. A third man, who thereafter acted as Geoffrey Kuper's guide, approached the canoe. His first concern was to make sure that Geoffrey was all right and not suffering in any way. He took the fish from Geoffrey and threw it into the sea. Geoffrey was required to retrieve it. By doing this, the fish was washed clean of blood and so was handed clean to the guide. The initiate was also given an opportunity to wash himself because by this time he was covered with bonito blood from the bilge of the canoe.

After bathing the initiate was given a shield with which to cover his face from the gaze of the women. Covering the face was also a feature of the initiation cere-

monies at Ulawa and Arosi (Fox 1925 : 346, Ivens 1927 : 133). At Ulawa, according to Ivens, "it was held that any woman who saw a *malaohu* boy would die." It is particularly important at this time because a group of women had gathered to the right of the walled custom house enclosure. They wailed loudly as though he had died. My interpretation of the act of mourning is that the women realise that the *maraufu*, from this moment, is theoretically no longer a child. The child self has "died" and is replaced by an emergent adult self.

The initiate walked up the beach towards the custom house. In front of the custom house and on the seaward side was a platform, known as *reitao*. Sitting cross-legged on the *reitao* was the *mwane-apuna*, costumed in loincloth and shell-money. The initiate's bonito was handed to the priest by the guide. The women were excluded from this part of the ceremony and only men were present. The initiate approached the *reitao* and sat cross-legged in front of the priest. At this point the priest uttered an incantation. After this, he took a portion of coral lime and sprinkled it over the arms and chest of the initiate. Then he brushed the initiate's body with the leaves of the *siri*, symbol of the gardener. Now standing up with the bonito, the priest squeezed the gills of the bonito to extract a few drops of blood which he aimed at the mouth of the initiate. The initiate swallowed the blood. Initiates were also required to swallow a few drops of bonito blood at Ulawa (Ivens 1927 : 141).

I have chosen to base this portion of the description on an actual case, that of Geoffrey Kuper. What he experienced represents what is expected of each *maraufu*. Every boy must go through the ritual acts just outlined.

Up to this point in the initiation cycle the initiate has undergone a transformation by "catching" his first bonito. A man is not a man until he has been "blooded" by his first catch. Similarly, a bonito canoe is not a "proper" canoe until it has made its first catch. In essence, this is what the term *maraufu* refers to, namely, the acquisition of mature status or the transformation from a state of being nothing to a state of social acceptance and recognition. The transformation is realised by catching a bonito fish, by hugging it closely to the body, by being covered with bonito blood and finally by swallowing bonito blood. By these means and validated by the incantations of the priest and the presence of other men as witnesses, the *maraufu* assumes some of the "qualities" of the valued bonito.

After swallowing the blood the initiate is given a short rope and is asked to scale a coconut tree. However, he gets only part of the way up when he is asked to climb down again. This ends the activities of probably the longest day in the life of a *maraufu*. He goes straight to bed afterwards.

The fishing expeditions continue until every boy has been made a *maraufu*. In each case the first fish caught "belongs" to the initiate and after drinking its blood, the bonito is cooked in the custom house and eaten by the priest, the father and the male relatives of the initiate. Initiates are not permitted to eat bonito at this stage.

The boys go through a daily routine of walking along the beach, right on the water's edge so that their footprints will be washed away. Their faces are shielded from the women. They go to the same secluded location, swim and bathe, and then walk back in procession to the custom house. Then they eat. In the evenings they either play quietly among themselves or they listen to accounts of local folklore and traditions told by the priest. Seclusion provides many opportunities for education which is one reason why very young boys are not favoured for initiation.

Providing a regular supply of food for the *maraufu* is the responsibility of the parents. In the case of boys from other villages, the parents make arrangements with local relatives to take food to the custom house.

Two days before the public ceremony, which the Americans witnessed, each boy is required to act out a piece of dramatic play. He must "become" a bonito, dive into the sea and be "caught" in a net. This is done at two or three o'clock in the morning. I am not certain what the significance of the act is but would suggest that it is a way of differentiating bonito of the sea from bonito of the earth. The *maraufu* are caught by man and they will carry out the duties and functions of earthly "bonito". One of those functions is to hunt and catch bonito of the sea.

The next day soon after breakfast, each boy sits on his bed and awaits his turn at "licking the bone". The priest recites an incantation and then hands the *maraufu* a bonito vertebra bone which he must put into his mouth. Then the boy licks it with his tongue, several times. From this moment the *maraufu* are permitted to eat bonito and will partake that very night if the fishermen were successful that day.

After the "licking the bone" act is completed the priest cuts a lock of hair from each boy with a chalcedony knife, known as *naki*. Each boy is instructed to wrap his lock of hair in a piece of ivory-nut palm leaf and tie it securely with coconut fibre. When all bundles are ready the boys walk in procession along the beach to a special rocky location where the bundles are to be hidden. Concealment of the hair locks is supervised by the priests to ensure that adequate measures are taken. On no account must the hair be discovered by anyone. Unfortunately, I did not ask about the significance of hiding the hair but there are suggestions of a Polynesian concept of personal *tapu* and sacredness of the head and hair. For example, Santa Ana men will never crawl under a house which has a floor because women have walked on that floor; thus, there is danger of personal defilement.

After concealing the hair, the boys return to the custom house. All the necessary ritual acts are complete but for the public appearance the next day. Early in the morning the boys bathe and have a simple breakfast. Afterwards they oil their bodies with coconut oil and they begin to put on their ceremonial costumes which their fathers have brought for them. Up until this moment the boys have been quite naked. Donning the apron and wearing shell-money costumes dramatises the change in status of the boys. Getting ready for the public display on the initiation platform takes most of the morning. Each boy will be costumed in a manner which befits the social position of his family.

BUILDING THE QEA OR INITIATION PLATFORM

The commencement of the initiation ceremonies coincides with the opening of the bonito fishing season. Construction of the *qea* or initiation display platform commences as soon as the first catch has been made. A different term for the platform is used at Ulawa, where it is known as a *tahe* or stage. Its full name is *tahe ni malaohu* (Ivens 1927: 142). Geoffrey Kuper described the *qea* as having an oblong ground plan and standing about 25 feet or approximately 7.6 metres high. It was richly carved with shark and frigate bird forms and with sculptures of warriors armed with spear or with bow and arrow. It was flat-roofed and covered all over with tree-fern and coconut leaves. On one of the upper corners was a life-sized carving of a man with a fighting spear in his hand and this figure could be turned so as to make it appear as though the spear

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Fig. 2. The *qea* or initiation platform that was used in Gupuna in 1943. Decorations consist mainly of bonito canoe outlines, two above the central house and two on the sides of the platform. There are also wood sculptures of a mythical shark, known as *iri* visible on the right of the platform. Mr Henry Kuper stands behind the uppermost canoe. Note that the side of the canoe in front of Mr Kuper is decorated with three dimensional frigate birds and paintings of bonito fish. Below, on the side of the platform is another plank similarly decorated. No boards decorated in this way can be found on the island now.

would be thrown. On the other corner was a moveable figure of a warrior with a bow and arrow and this figure could be turned full circle. The platform had four doors, one on each side but Geoffrey Kuper did not explain what these were used for. The description above is based on what Geoffrey Kuper saw in Natagera in the late 1920s, probably in 1927.

Turning now to the Gupuna *qea* it will be noticed at once that the photograph presents additional information and evidence of change (Fig. 2). Firstly, there is a platform on which a house-like structure is built. Around the house is a walk-way which permits the initiates to walk around the platform. Secondly, there are two stairways up which the initiates must walk in a ritualised dance-like step. Wood sculpture on the Gupuna *qea* consists of four highly decorated bonito fishing canoes, two above the platform house and one on each side of the platform at right angles to the uppermost pair. There are also carvings of fish forms probably of the *iri* which represents a mythical shark. Life sized carvings of human forms are not evident in the Gupuna *qea* so that in spite of its elaborate and dramatic appearance the 1943 *qea* appears to be less dramatic and less ornate than the earlier *qea* described by Kuper. Its outstanding feature, according to Kuper, is the idea of building a smaller *qea* upon a larger one. This platform thus qualifies twice over as a *qea* and on that count must be regarded as great.


A comparison with Ulawa platforms, as illustrated in Ivens (1927 : 334) and in Bernatzik (1935 : Pl 13), shows that the Gupuna one is far more elaborate. The latter has two sets of stairways to the single centrally-placed stairway of Ulawa. Decorations of Ulawa platforms consist of painted fish forms and three-dimensional shark and frigate bird forms somewhat similar to those on the Gupuna platform but the overall effect is not as grand as in Santa Ana. However, Fox's (1927:348) illustration indicates that, formerly, Ulawa platforms were more elaborate than those featured in Ivens and Bernatzik. Fox suggested that the entire structure represented a bonito fish into whose body the initiates walked but this interpretation was questioned by Ivens (1927 : 142). In fact, the stage resembled a comb and was thus, called the *tahe arape* (stage-hair comb).

The varying complexity of initiation platforms is a consequence of "bigmanship" as each sponsoring leader and his group strive to out-do previous sponsors and set standards of excellence and opulence which are difficult for rivals to surpass. Under this kind of system it is inevitable that platforms would tend to become increasingly complex. Each successive sponsor is under an obligation to do at least as well as the previous sponsor but each would prefer to improve on past efforts. Artists are thus encouraged to be creative and innovative rather than being merely repetitive. What they produce are supposed to enhance the reputation of the sponsor who commissions them. The challenge to rivals takes the form of a large pig which is displayed during the public ceremony. To take possession of the pig, is to accept the challenge and become responsible for the next initiation ceremony. At the Gupuna ceremony, in 1943, the challenge pig was not claimed. What this means, according to Kuper, is that no *qea* of the Gupuna type will ever be built again. The implication is that one competitive series is over and the way is clear to begin another series. In simpler *qea* the challenge is a bunch of betel nuts, acceptance of which obliges the sponsor to build a *qea* of similar standard and type.

THE CEREMONIAL WELCOME

Some of the visiting Americans arrived by flying boat but General Howard and Commander Wilson came by submarine chaser. The General's party was met by an ocean-going canoe, known as *risu-e-rima*, into which the visitors transferred. This canoe brought the party close to the village where they were met by a party of warriors armed with the shield typical of this area, and a spear (Fig. 3). A war dance was performed and the warriors rushed down into the sea brandishing their spears (Fig. 4). The dance completed, the posture of menacing defiance was dropped and the warriors waded into the water to beach the heavy canoe and help the visitors ashore. This is shown in Fig. 5 which is interesting as it features a bonito canoe, or *againiwaiau*, in the background. This is the type of canoe in which the initiates are taken to "catch" their first bonito.

Once ashore the visitors were escorted by Mrs Henry Kuper, a woman of important social position in the Gafe matrilineage, and her daughter Clara (Fig 6). Mrs Kuper, who appeared to be also the chief tattooer of women in Santa Ana, died in 1970. The gala-like atmosphere of the day is suggested in Fig. 7. A huge welcome sign is out and Mrs Kuper together with the women and girls of the village pose for the visitors. This particular picture is a reflection of the war situation and bears evidence of the appreciation of the villagers for the military success of the American warriors. The successful warrior is highly valued in this area. Normally, it is almost impossible to persuade villagers to bring out their women and girls even for a photograph.



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Fig. 3. The challenge team armed with the curved shield, known as *qauata* and made of hardwood, and spears. The shield on the right does not belong to this area but was collected earlier by Henry Kuper from another island.

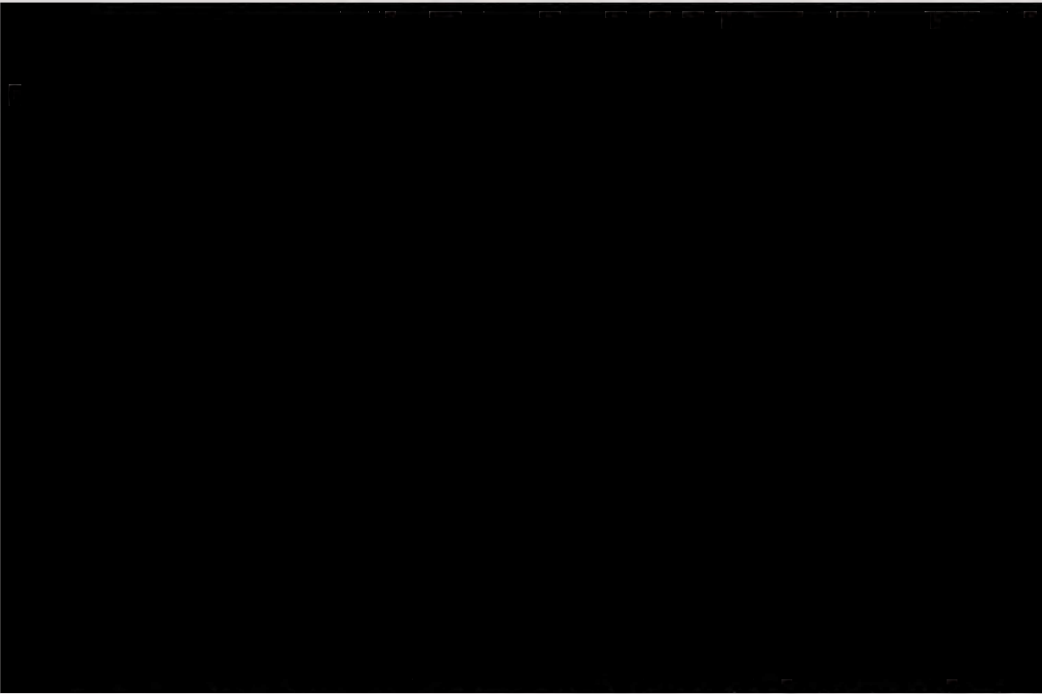



Fig. 4. Brandishing their weapons the warriors rush down to the water's edge as though warding off the intruders.



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Fig. 5. The ceremonial challenge over, the warriors move into the water to help beach the ocean going canoe, known locally as *risu-e-rima*, and help the visitors ashore. In the background is a bonito fishing canoe, the *againiwaiau*, which are used to take initiates out on their first fishing expedition. Both canoes are plank-built.

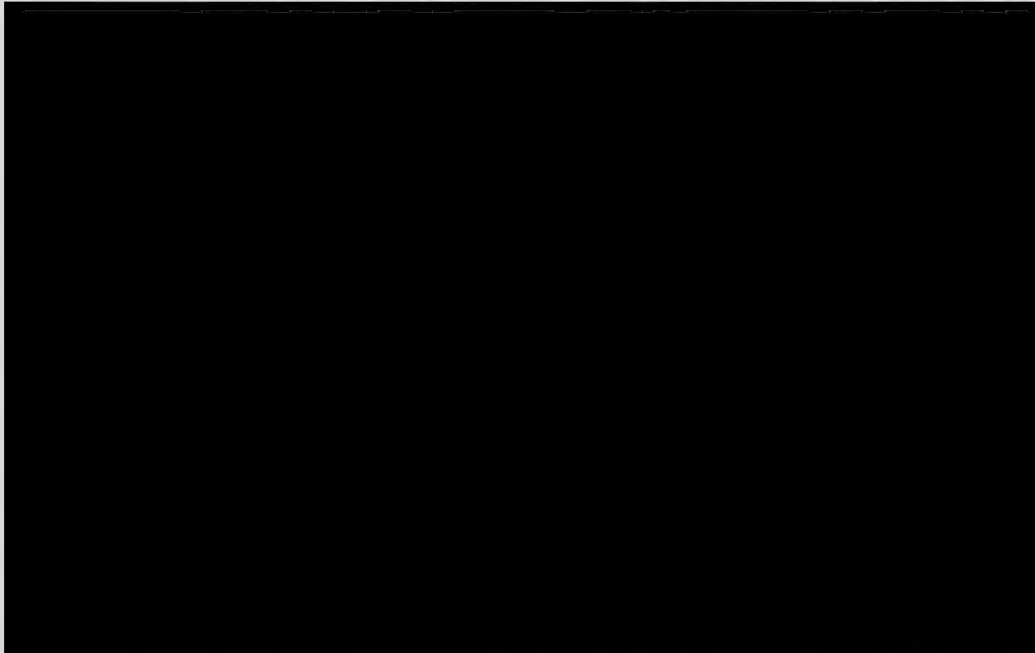
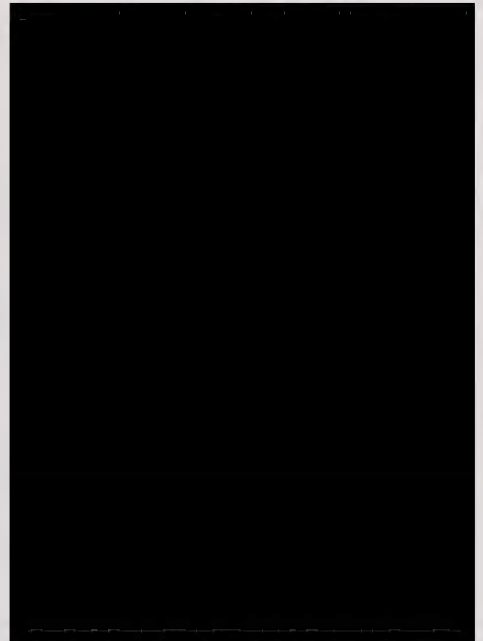
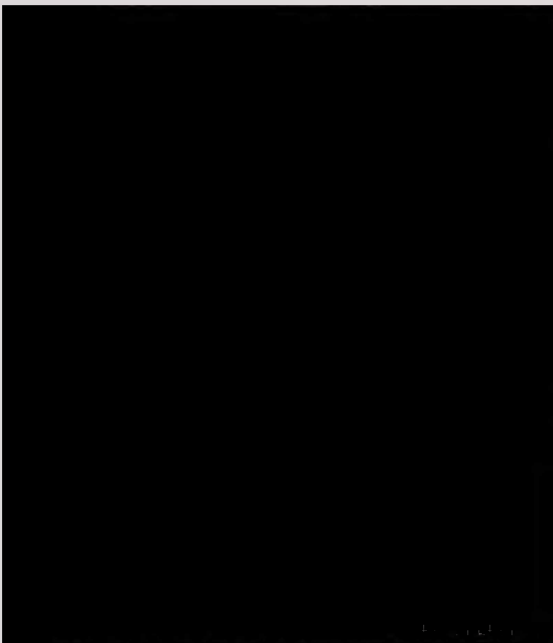


Fig. 6. Once ashore the visitors are escorted by Mrs Kuper, or Kanana, and her daughter, Clara. An armed escort has been provided by the British Administration. The British Officer in the group was not identified.



Fig. 7. A welcome flag has been hung for the visitors. In front of the temporary shed are decorated houseposts, just visible above the heads of the girls. Kanana (Mrs Kuper) here poses with other women of the village and with the younger girls and boys many of them wearing shell-money ornaments.



Figs. 8, 9. 8. The "enslavement" of the Solomon Island people by the Japanese conquerors is dramatised in this picture for the benefit of the American visitors who freed them. An effigy of a Japanese soldier was carved out of wood and dressed for the occasion.
9. Another sculptured effigy of the enemy carved by local Santa Ana carvers.


Reminders of the war situation which prevailed in 1943 are shown in Fig. 8, which dramatises the native conception of what the Japanese did to their people, and in Fig. 9 which features an effigy of the enemy. In Santa Ana the effects of warfare were felt as many of the men served as labourers for the Americans in Guadalcanal. Geoffrey Kuper was one of the "coast watchers" of the Solomons and a war hero of the area.

WELCOMING THE DANCERS OF ULAWA

Almost forgotten in the excitement of welcoming the Americans was the arrival of the dancers from the island of Ulawa. The dancers were met on shore by Kanana (Mrs Kuper) and her young nephew, a *koukou* (sacred chief) and leader of the *maraufu* boys. It is customary to hand over red shell money, known as *faga*, to a visiting dance team, and the photograph (Fig. 10) shows Kanana doing this. The highest social position both in Santa Ana and Santa Catalina belongs to the *koukou*, who is the first born male or female in the Gafe (Crab) clan reckoned through the matriline or the oldest child in his particular generation. In 1943, Kanana's nephew was the youngest *koukou* on the island and the last to be so designated. The cycle of ceremonies by which a *koukou*'s status is socially validated was never completed and thus it is doubtful whether this *koukou*, now a middle-aged man, will ever assume the full role of a *koukou*. However, in 1943, the option was still open and the *koukou* was put into the centre of all important ceremonial transactions, as in Fig. 10.

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Fig. 10. Kanana and her nephew, a young *koukou* and "leader" of the *maraufu* boys, approach the dancers of Ulawa to present the customary red shell money (*faga*) to a visiting dance team.



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Fig. 11. The *qea*, or initiation stage, is blessed by Father Hill. This view of the *qea* shows that the stairways go up one side and down the other. Clearly visible, too, is the smaller *qea* on top of the larger one. Sculptured fish forms are more easily seen in this picture. The decorations below the platform are probably bright orange mangrove fruit.

THE COMPLETION OF THE INITIATION CEREMONY

Christianity was first introduced into Santa Ana in 1925 (Fox 1925 : 6). By 1943 it was firmly established at Gupuna but it was not until the next decade that the village of Natagera became predominantly Christian. Evidence of the firm hold Christianity had established in Gupuna is provided in Fig. 11 which shows Father Hill of the Melanesian Mission blessing the initiation platform before it is used by the initiates. The bonito cult with its associated complex of frigate birds and sharks was central to the religious system, the value system and to the technological and artistic system of Santa Ana. The participation of missionaries in the initiation ceremony indicates a high degree of erosion of the indigenous religious system and it is difficult to see how the inconsistencies and contradictions of the two systems could have been reconciled.

It is possible that participation of a missionary was "staged" for the benefit of the Christian Americans but I doubt whether this was the case. It is more likely that by 1943 most of the Gupuna villagers had become Christian and wanted double protection. This was a way of including the missionary and gaining the prestige and protective power of the Christian god.

However, when an intrusive ideology is included in an important native institution one suspects that something has happened to force an entry. I am suggesting that the economic base of the *maraufu* institution had been disturbed by the imposition of British law, a point which I shall elaborate later. By shaking its economic foundation the *maraufu* institution lost some of its value. A complementary cult, that of shark worship, particularly the Waumauma cult, was able to rise in importance thus challenging the supremacy of the bonito cult. The subsequent intrusion of the missionaries with yet another cult hastened the demise of the *maraufu* institution because there was a hope of a new prosperity based on the technology and cash resources of the white man, whom the missionaries represented.

It should also be mentioned that Santa Ana society is divided into two loosely organised moieties each with its grouping of matrilineal clans. Allied with the Atawa moiety are the Mwa (Snake), Mwaroa, and the now extinct Pagewa (Shark) clans. Allied with the Amwea moiety are the Gafe (Crab), Garofai (Turtle), Ariu (Trevalli), Kaura (Frigate Bird) and Apenawaru clans. Population strengths of the various clans in 1970 were as follows: Mwa 390, Gafe 326, Garofai 88, Ariu 184, Mwaroa 61, Apenawaru 76, Kaura 8, Pagewa nil. Thus, the total population of Santa Ana, when everyone is at home, is 1133. When I conducted a census in January, 1971, there were actually 745 persons in Santa Ana. This figure can be compared with 360 which was the population figure given by Henry Kuper for 1926 (Kuper 1926 : 5). The resident population has thus more than doubled and the total population more than tripled in 45 years. A great fear among the local population is that something would happen to bring everyone home. This would cause a major crisis because local agricultural resources can barely cope with the needs of the resident population of 700 which swells to 800 when the school children return for their holidays. Overpopulation is already a problem on this island of poor soil and limited economic resources.

I return now to the photographic record. The high point of the day's activities is about to begin. Fully costumed, as in Fig. 12, the initiates are lined up ready to ascend the platform. Each boy is dressed, as shown more clearly in Fig. 13, in shell money wrist bands (*ngaungau-ni-rima*), arm bands called *raquo*, a belt (*fogofogo*), ankle bands which are similar to the wristbands, a cowrie shell band below each knee and called a *qaga*, bandoliers of six to eight strings of shell money worn across the breast

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Fig. 12. The *maraufu* boys, numbering about twenty, are arranged into lines before approaching the platform.

and called *mamafe*, a necklace of 400 flying-fox teeth, called *roke*, around the neck, a headband of cowrie shells, called *taraipuri* over the forehead and a crescent-shaped pearl shell neck pendant called *tafi*. According to the wealth of the particular family a boy might also wear armrings of fossilized clam-shell called *gima*, a nose ornament known as *tamono-arafa*, and a comb decorated with streamers, on the head. Ideally, every boy should be carrying a small basket in which he will place his bonito fish hooks. However, whatever the circumstances of the parent each boy must carry an initiation shield called a *maramaraitapa* which is distinctive of this area.

There are regional differences in regard to what an initiate carries with him onto the platform. In Sa'a, he carries a paddle and the initiate is required to paddle as he walks up the platform. On the other hand, at Ulawa, the initiate must carry three spears decorated in red, one in the right hand and two in the left (Ivens 1927 : 142). At Santa Ana, the unique *maramaraitapa*, decorated characteristically in frigate bird designs is required. A selection of shields, decorated in various ways, is shown in Fig. 14. Modern non-functional shields are still being produced today for sale to art buyers and museums.

By about 1 p.m., the boys are ready to begin their ritualised procession up the platform stairways. I don't know how the boys were divided at Gupuna but when Geoffrey Kuper was initiated local boys went up one stairway and boys from other villages went up the other. The division could also be made in accordance with moiety membership because both moieties in Santa Ana participate in the initiation ceremony. Each moiety owns a custom house, one belonging to the Atawa moiety and the other to the Amwea moiety. It would be reasonable to infer that the two sets of stairways

For cultural reasons, this image has been removed.
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Fig. 13. This picture shows clearly the ceremonial costume items which are required for a *maraufu* boy. He holds his shield in the proper position.

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Fig. 14. Of interest in this picture is evidence of the wide spread of ages of the boys, from late teens down to mere toddlers. Also of interest is the nose ornament *tamono-arafa* being worn by the tallest boy. This picture also depicts a variety of shield designs, all based on frigate bird motifs.

up and down the other side of the initiation platform is a reflection of the social division into two moieties. In order to avoid conflict each moiety must be represented in the platform.


The boys are lined up ready to proceed towards the appropriate stairway. Up on the platform, the priest begins to tap a rhythm on his bamboo lime container. The boys hum in time with the rhythm and they dance towards the stairway, the body turning from one side to the other (Fig. 15). They proceed up the stairs until all are standing around the platform. The *maramaraitapa* shield is carried across the chest. All eyes are upon the *maraufu* boys, who are now elevated and set off on a ritually powerful stage. The villagers must look up towards them and admire them.

By this time the spectators have milled around the *qea* eagerly waiting for what is to follow (Fig. 16). On a signal from the village chief the boys reach down to a prepared pile of gifts made up of sugar cane pieces, betel nut, *amasi* leaves to chew with betel nut, sticks of tobacco and possibly cigarettes and in this case army rations of non-lethal food items. These items are thrown down¹ to the crowd. There is a mad scramble for these gifts and this effectively relaxes the dramatic tension of the event.

¹ Full ceremonial display of the initiates was a feature in Ulawa and Sa'a as well but the similarities end there. Ivens did not mention gift-giving from the platform as occurring in Ulawa but in Sa'a the boys ate a meal on the platform and threw down morsels for the spectators (Ivens 1927: 142). The Santa Ana practice appears to be closely related to the Sa'a custom as in both places food is "distributed" from the platform.

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Fig. 15. Holding their shields to their chests the boys dance up the stairways in a side-ways gait. It will be noticed that the youngest initiates are being assisted by older persons. Santa Ana people are very fond of children and will not subject them wilfully to unnecessary cruelty.



For cultural reasons, these images have been removed.
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Fig. 16. The initiates have all been received onto the platform by the priest and the village chief with his hand raised is about to give the signal for the throwing of gifts by the *maraufu* boys to the crowd below.

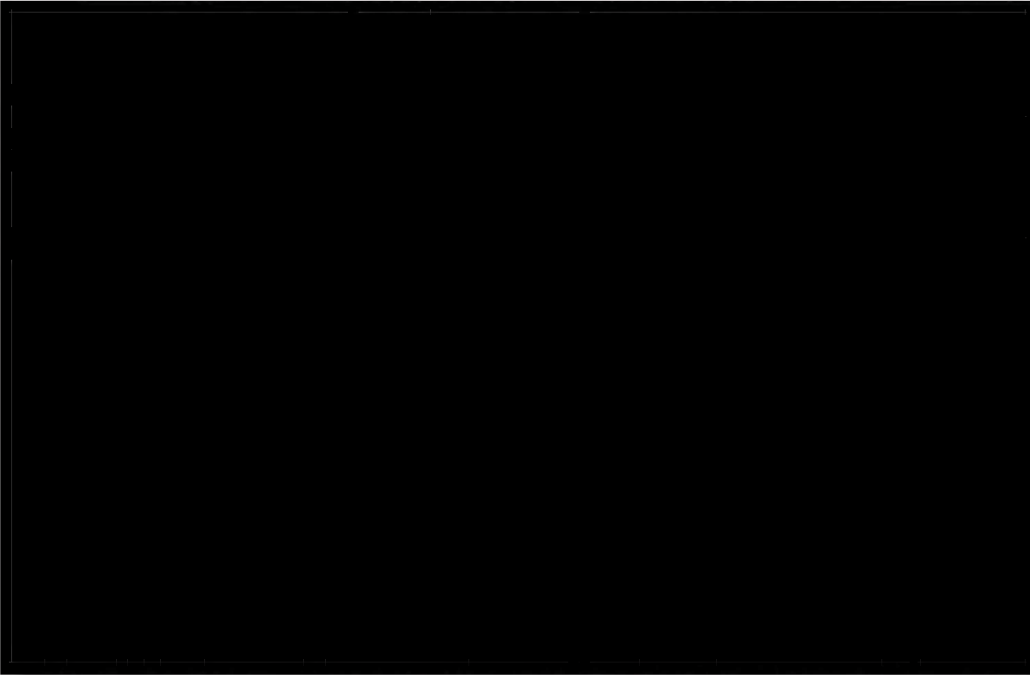


Fig. 17. The gift scramble over the boys come down from the platform and they are entertained by the adults with pantomimes and dancing. It is not known by the author what event is being dramatised in this picture.

Up until this moment all *maraufu* activities have been carried out quietly and very seriously. The scramble provides a much needed release from tension for the *maraufu* boys. The obvious psychological release apart, the gift scramble probably represents a way of thanking the spectators for their participation in the activities. It could also be viewed as a ceremonial payment to the public by the *maraufu* boys, for recognising their change in status from childhood to adulthood.

The changed status of the *maraufu* boys is made apparent when they eventually come down from the platform. They sit together on the ground and they are entertained by the adults. Dramatic dances are performed, as in Fig. 17, and male dance teams put on a dance show for their benefit. The photographic record does not, however, include group dancing by men and it must be assumed that this was replaced by female dancing as shown in Fig. 18. The importance of the entire ceremony is reflected in the fact that dance teams featured here came from Ulawa, near Malaita. By now it should be about 4 p.m. and the preliminary dancing should be over.

A cleared grassy area is next covered with coconut leaves and huge wooden bowls of *susugu* pudding made from pounded *taro* are laid out. For the American visitors a temporary feast house was erected and tables built, as shown in Fig. 19. In addition to *susugu* pudding, a highly favoured ceremonial dish in this area, there are roasted yams, fish and roast pork. The newly initiated men sit together to eat but everyone else participates in the grand feast thus emphasizing the unity of the villagers.

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Fig. 18. It is evidently late afternoon as the shadows are long and the women from Ulawa are performing one of their bonito fishing dances. Major Moore suggested that the dance was being performed for the man who stands in the middle of the group in commemoration of his wife who had died a year earlier. It is more likely, however, as Kuper suggests, that he is a priest who is protecting the dancers by warding off evil spirits. The dancers do not take part in the chant but concentrate on the dance actions.

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Fig. 19. From right Commander Wilson, General Howard and Colonel Widdy have been presented with native food served in ceremonial bowls. Decorated with inlaid nautilus shell and painted black with charcoal and the juice of a tree root these bowls were used by adherents of various clan gods when making sacrifices to them. The bowls of 1943 show evidence of more restraint in their decoration than is evident in the bowls produced now.

As a mark of honour, Commander Wilson, General Howard and Major Widdy were presented with small carved and inlaid bowls (*apira*) of food (Fig. 19). Such bowls were traditionally used by pagans when eating sacrificial food to their pagan deities¹. The conflict of ideologies here takes secondary place to the high ritual and artistic value placed upon such bowls. Ordinary food bowls would have been deemed inappropriate for the occasion. Of ethnological interest is the fact that the three bowls shown in the photograph are relatively plain and sparsely decorated with inlaid nautilus shell when compared with bowls which are being produced now. A likely reason for the blossoming of decorations is that the bowls are no longer functional (Mead 1973b).

When the feast is over the area is cleared away and dancing recommences and goes well into the night. Some of the evening performances are shown in Figs. 20 and 21. When the evening dances conclude the newly initiated men are free to rejoin their families. Their initiation is complete.

¹ Great numbers of these bowls are produced each year. I presented two such bowls to the Auckland Museum. Earlier, William Davenport collected a large quantity of them for the University Museum at Pennsylvania. Many of these bowls are featured in his 1971 article.

For cultural reasons, these images have been removed.
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Fig. 20. The two women on the left are blowing a dance rhythm through large sea-shells while the children dance. This is one of the dancing items of the evening entertainment.

Fig. 21. A dance by older girls of the village. Kanana's daughter, Clara, is on extreme right.

While it is true that many innovations were introduced to accommodate the visitors much of the activities followed traditional custom. For example, Fig. 22 records the fact that all services had to be acknowledged and paid for. Mrs Kuper, as Gafe hostess, is shown rewarding a woman for her participation in the dancing. The woman to the left is dressed in the traditional Santa Ana costume which is designed in such a way as to reveal tattooed decorations of the woman to maximum advantage. The photograph is of high ethnological value not only because it shows a true Santa Ana skirt but also because it shows extensive tattooing to a degree which cannot be seen today. The fully tattooed woman has disappeared from the Eastern Solomons. By fully tattooed I mean that a woman is decorated with the full complement of frontal and back tattoo as illustrated by Kuper (1926, Figs. 5, 6). In 1926, according to Kuper (1926 : 3) there were only six fully tattooed women in Santa Ana and Santa Catalina. The woman shown in Fig. 22 appears to lack only the tattoo pattern on her back. Her thighs and buttocks are tattooed. Although there are still tattooed women in evidence on both islands most have only the frontal pattern from the breast down to the pubic area.

Apparently, the American visitors remained for all of the ceremony and for the evening entertainment. The Service Command photographs thus provide a sampling of the activities associated with Gupuna's last initiation ceremony from the moment of their arrival until late into the evening.

In the Annual Report for the Eastern Solomons District, 1938, Waddell recorded that Ulawa was visited and the final stages of an initiation ceremony were witnessed there. It was thought at the time that no further initiation ceremonies would be held in Ulawa. As described by Waddell the Ulawa ceremony is similar in all essential details to the Santa Ana ceremony described here. One difference noted by Waddell was that in Ulawa a triangular shaped platform was used, its apex end decorated like the prow of a canoe. Apart from this difference Waddell was of the opinion that the initiation ceremony of Ulawa was derived from Santa Ana.

CONCLUSIONS

The photographs presented here are important ethnological documents because they capture an historical moment that will never be repeated in Gupuna. At some time in the future some aspects of the *maraufu* ceremony may be revived but the equipment used will not be the same as used in Gupuna. Nor will the participants act in the same way because by then they will be more acculturated than the Gupunu people were in 1943. Many of the people shown in the photographs have either aged considerably or are dead. Mr Henry Kuper, shown on top of the initiation platform in Fig. 2, died some years ago. Of German extraction he married Kanana, of the Gafe clan, and settled in Santa Ana just before World War I¹. Until the missionaries entered the area in the 1920s he was the only white man in the area. His wife Kanana, who is featured in many of the photographs, remained a native, lived native style, and played an important role in native affairs. With the active encouragement of her husband, who

¹ Bernatzik (1935: 7-13) devoted a chapter of his book to Henry or Heinrich Kueper, who came originally from Hamburg.

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Fig. 22. Kanana (Mrs Kuper), on right, is paying the other woman with cigarettes for participating in the dancing. Important in the photo is the traditional Santa Ana skirt worn by the older woman. Since conversion to Christianity this garment is no longer worn. Also important is the extent of body tattooing evident at this time. The woman has a full complement of tattooing patterns which feature mainly frigate bird motifs.

in view of his published articles on native customs could be classed as an amateur ethnographer, she tried to keep native custom alive. There seems little doubt that there would not have been an initiation ceremony at Gupuna had she not undertaken to sponsor it at great cost to her family. As mentioned earlier, she too, has passed on.

The fortunate presence of the Americans at this closing ceremony combined with the passion of western civilisation for photographing exotica, conspired to preserve a record of inestimable value to ethnology. Of particular importance are the visual documentations of material objects formerly recorded inadequately in words only. Verbal descriptions of the initiation platform can never do justice to the remarkable edifice built by the Santa Ana people.

Of more general interest, however, are evidences of change in the bonito initiation ceremony and of the entire indigenous religious system. The participation of a missionary in the Gupuna ceremony indicates the degree to which the cult was losing its integrity. I would hypothesize that previously there was a balance between the positive force of the bonito cult and its negative opposition, the shark cult. The bonito cult was

positive because it motivated creative activities such as obtaining food for survival and providing artists with themes and motifs for their decorative art. All of the dominant material items of the culture such as the custom house, the memorial bonito canoe, known as *parufuraikao*, the bonito fishing canoe or *againiwaiau*, the initiation platform and the initiation shield relate to the bonito cult. Throughout the culture there is evidence of the pervasive influence of the bonito cult thereby suggesting its centrality to the entire cultural and religious system. By contrast the shark cult¹ provided the mainspring for a very limited range of important artifacts. Chief among these are the shark casket or *iri* and the ceremonial bowls both large and small. Even in these artifacts, however, bonito themes and motifs are to be found.

I am proposing that in the indigenous culture the lifegiving positive force of the bonito was dominant in the religious system and was largely responsible for the development of the local culture. Its opposition, the shark cult, represented a negative force and death was its main concern. In theory the death dealing power of the shark deities was directed against outsiders. Within the social system the shark deities functioned as protective gods and in this sense complemented and reinforced the power of the bonito deities.

The complementary relation between these two forces could be upset, however. By 1943 the bonito cult had already lost considerable ground, thus removing important checks against the power of the shark deities. By far the most important influence for change came much earlier in 1893 with the imposition of British law. Santa Ana warriors could no longer raid the mainland to capture slaves to sell at Haununu although they tried to maintain the custom for as long as they could. The last capture involved a lad, called Adam, shortly after World War I. Some idea of the importance of capturing children and adults as a source of wealth to Santa Ana can be gained by considering the payment given by a Haununu chief for Adam whom he adopted to take the place of his deceased son. The raiders received 10 *faga* (about \$240 today), 30 *sao* or white shell money (\$180) and 10 *mamafe* (say \$100), thus a total of \$520 in Australian currency. With such wealth the raiders were able to buy large quantities of food to supplement the meagre resources of the island.

The victims of raids were either sold into adoption, as in Adam's case, or they were sold as slaves to the producers of shell-money at Haununu. Originally, Haununu was the production centre of red and white shell-money for a large portion of the Eastern Solomons which, of course, included the small islands of Santa Ana and Santa Catalina. Enforced cessation of slave capture threatened the shell-money industry by removing an important source of labour. Finally, it collapsed completely. At the same time it automatically cut off an important source of wealth to the island populations of Santa Ana and Santa Catalina thus upsetting the survival pattern and life-style which they had established. The people of Santa Ana no longer had the means of accumulating ceremonial surpluses in *taro*, yams and pigs. This in turn affected the bonito initiation ceremony as well as other ceremonies which all required ceremonial wealth.

The Gupuna initiation ceremony of 1943 provides evidence that the villagers tried their best to maintain this very important ceremony. However, with the economic resources of the community severely curtailed and not replaced by a satisfactory cash

¹ The folklore associated with the shark deities, Karemanua and Waumauma, are given in Mead 1972b.

economy they simply could not continue the custom. There does come a point especially in an overpopulated island of meagre resources when considerations of biological survival take precedence over all other cultural matters. This point came in Gupuna after 1943 when no further *maraufu* ceremonies were held. It came in Natagera after 1956 and much later in Santa Catalina. During the 1960s William Davenport witnessed the last initiation ceremony held in Santa Catalina. The severe cyclone of 1971 which wrecked the houses and removed the vegetation cover of both islands makes it highly unlikely that another *maraufu* ceremony will be held in this area in the near future. A natural disaster has further impoverished the population of the two islands and forced them further towards a type of economy which is geared towards biological survival first and foremost.

Thus, the initiation ceremony died out in Santa Ana as a result of a combination of pressures. Erosion of its economic base through the prevention of slave capture had the most powerful effect. The inability to stage initiation ceremonies with confidence gave the complementary shark cult of Waumauma a chance to gain some supremacy in the value system. This was potentially a highly dangerous stage in religious change because the collapse of shell-money production at Haununu removed the heart of the overseas trading system so that overseas trading virtually ceased except for purchase of food from the mainland.

In such a situation the danger existed that the power of the shark deities would be directed inwards rather than outwards. More than likely this is what, in fact, happened and resulted in the extermination of the Pagewa clan in Santa Ana (Mead 1973a).

When Christian ideology and practice was introduced as an alternative in the 1920s the Gupuna people, followed later by other villagers, adopted it. Quite recently Christianity became the main religion at Santa Ana thus eclipsing the power of the bonito and shark deities.

Although I may have given the impression that the people of Santa Ana were presented with choices of action in regard to religious change, the evidence points to the fact that they had no choice at all. An assumption of the colonial experience is that respectably emancipated natives must have the same religion as their colonial masters. Thus in the long run indigenous native institutions, such as the *maraufu* ceremony, must be overcome and replaced. When Church and Government work together as they have done and are doing at present in the Protectorate, the *maraufu* ceremony has little chance of survival as a functional custom.

Acknowledgements. A few copies of the photographs presented here were in the possession of Mr Geoffrey Kuper who had them from his father, Henry Kuper. The photographs were badly faded and eaten by silver fish. These remnants impressed upon me their ethnographic importance and it was a matter of good fortune that a full set had long ago been presented to the Auckland Institute and Museum. The attribution of the photographs to the American Armed Services is based on the fact that Kuper's photographs were stamped with the following identification: "Service Command Photo Lab. 709."

To Mr Geoffrey Kuper, who not only permitted me free use of his notes on the initiation ceremony in Santa Ana but who also provided additional information relevant to this paper, I extend my most grateful thanks. He was my host and chief interpreter of Santa Ana customs. But for him my task would have been more difficult.

Identifications of officers are as supplied by Major Merrill Moore in his notes, except for some corrections given by Mr Geoffrey Kuper, who knew some of them personally.

Fieldwork was undertaken as part of a Bishop Museum Project entitled "An Interdisciplinary Investigation of the Prehistory of the S.E. Solomons and Santa Cruz Islands" led by Dr. Roger Green, who is presently Captain James Cook Fellow at the Auckland Institute and Museum, and by Mr Douglas Yen, of the Bishop Museum. The project was funded by the National Science Foundation. Fieldwork was carried out on the Star Harbour Region from December 1970 to February 1971.

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